

**MINUTES OF THE LOCAL MEETING OF THE
WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
June 17, 2008**

The local jurisdiction meeting of the Washington State Transportation Commission was called to order at 9:00 a.m., on Tuesday, June 17, 2008 at Big Bend Community College, 7662 Chanute Street NE, Moses Lake, Washington.

Commissioners present at the meeting were: Chair Dick Ford, Dan O’Neal, Bob Distler, Elmira Forner, Philip Parker and Dale Stedman.

CHAIRMAN WELCOME AND COMMISSION INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Ford introduced Commissioners and staff and welcomed meeting participants and guests.

TRANSPORTATION 101 – A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF TRANSPORTATION FUNDING IN WASHINGTON STATE

Paul Parker, Senior Policy Analyst, WSTC, stepped through the Transportation 101 PowerPoint presentation providing a brief overview of each slide.

CITY AND COUNTY TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

Mayor Ron Covey, City of Moses Lake, Joe Gavinski, City Manager, Gary Harer, Municipal Services Director, Greg Wright, Manager, Grant Transit Authority and Derek Pohle, Public Works Director.

The panel discussed congestion issues on Highway 17 through Moses Lake indicating that it presents one of the county’s biggest issues. Various funding ideas and possible solutions such as traffic diversions and adding a second bridge in the area were shared. The current bridge is the only bridge east/west to Interstate 90 and if something happened to the bridge it would pose serious community problems. Transportation groups are planning for this future project to provide transportation outside of the city core. The panel discussed rural issues and economic development in the county.

Commissioners discussed various funding ideas that the panel might consider. They also shared their concerns regarding funding of capital projects and the dependency on state gas tax dollars.

REGIONAL ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

Derek Pohle, Public Works Director, Grant County, Jan Van Ness, Public Works Director, City of Othello, Rick Becker, Public Works Director, Lincoln County and Doug D’Hondt, County Engineer, Kittitas County shared the uniqueness of the Quad Counties and incorporated areas successes and needs. Grant, Adams, Lincoln and Kittitas

Counties and their cities comprise the QuadCo RTPO. In all four counties, the economy is focused on agriculture, but I-90 and the rail line provide the only transportation link. Mobility, safety, and economic vitality are the area's biggest transportation challenges. With its population spreading to the west, a second lake crossing (and connecting road to I-90) is the transportation priority for the City of Moses Lake; aware that the State alone won't fund such an expensive bridge, Mayor Covey thinks support exists for local funding.

Additional emphasis on safety is the highest priority for the counties and the City of Othello. With 17% of the county roads in the state within the four counties, county public works directors again expressed concern with the safety of two-lane roads. In Othello, the intersections of city streets with State Route 26, result in major wrecks almost twice weekly. Building roundabouts could be an answer, but area residents do not currently support that solution.

The local representatives also suggested that the Washington Transportation Plan needs more of a local perspective: inflation shrinks the ability to preserve and maintain the large county and city road networks and cities lack a dedicated preservation funding program. Repair and reconstruction of bridges under 20 feet pose a special problem for counties and cities – they are ineligible for ANY state or federal money. Although Lincoln County, for instance, has 134 bridges longer than 20', it is also responsible for 80 drainage structures under 20' long. They ask that the WTP support more all weather roads to improve freight and goods movement; freeze and thaw conditions create axle-loading restrictions and speed restrictions. Enforcement is difficult; sometimes Lincoln County recommends that heavy loads run at night, when roads and their bases tighten up. A WSU Strategic Freight Transportation Analysis Report indicates which county roads are the highest priority for upgrading to all-weather status.

Trails are a big success in the Moses Lake and Othello areas: Moses Lake boasts 35 miles of activity trails and hopes for realignment of the CBR rail line will create another in-town trail. Othello recently completed a 4.8 mile walk-bike path with partners including medical businesses.

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (WSDOT) REGIONAL PROJECTS AND PERSPECTIVES

Donn Senn, Regional Administrator, North Central Region, WSDOT, provided an overview of 2005 Transportation Partnership Projects in the region that includes five projects on SR 17, three on SR 26, one on SR 28, three on I-90, one on SR 155 and SR 171.

BIOFUELS IN WASHINGTON

Professor Ralph Cavalieri, Washington State University and Ray Benavides, Vice President, Gen-X Energy Group, explained that Eastern Washington plays a major role in biofuels development. Professor Ralph Cavalieri told how Washington State University is working on a strategy to maximize the positive impact of biomass in Washington, beginning with an inventory of biomass, aside from production of energy crops.

The greatest potential for biofuel production is perfection of cellulosic biofuel from municipal solid waste, forest and agricultural residues, and intentionally grown cellulosic resources such as poplar and highly productive grasses. WSU is also looking at opportunities to use and benefit from biofuels by-products, such as glycerol. The \$24.8 million Bioproducts, Sciences and Engineering Laboratory at WSU Tri-Cities will collaborate with PNNL in research and product development.

Gen-X is one of the Washington companies investing in biofuels technology. Formed nearby in 2005, Gen-X was recently selected to produce the biodiesel for Washington State Ferries, which will require removing sterols from the biodiesel. A Gen-X manager said that at the current price of \$5.40/gallon, biodiesel – with government incentives -- is competitive with oil diesel but that eliminating oil production subsidies would create an easier path for biodiesel and other biofuels.

TRANSPORTATION AND THE FUTURE OF FARMING

Chief Eric Hurlburt, Domestic Marketing and Economic Development, Washington State Department of Agriculture, Washington State Potato Commission Executive Director Chris Voigt, Coulee City wheat farmer Brad Isaak and Wenatchee Valley Traffic Association Manager Charlie Pomianek spoke to the commission Tuesday afternoon.

The Department of Agriculture is developing a long-range plan for the Future of Farming. With 75% of Washington's agricultural output leaving the state, transportation is critical. The Department's Domestic Marketing and Economic Development Chief Eric Hurlburt co-chaired a panel of Washington State Potato Commission Executive Director Chris Voigt, Coulee City wheat farmer Brad Isaak and Wenatchee Valley Traffic Association Manager Charlie Pomianek to provide an overview of the role their respective products play in the state's economy, often citing the amount of product shipped in terms of trucks parked bumper-to-bumper from Spokane to Seattle and back again. Their key message is that agriculture shippers produce large volume, low cost commodities; they need a reliable, cost-effective, integrated transportation system that includes truck, rail and barge to get products to and from the farm, to processors and to markets locally, within the US and overseas.

The panel emphasized the benefits and costs of sending freight via rail and pointed to the creation of rail car pools and other companies as positive movements in the region. The Potato Commission specifically suggested that the State produce an annual report card on rail service, create incentives for expanded rail capacity, including private investment, and continue support for the produce rail car pool, which is being used at capacity.

Voigt asked the commission to support policies to keep freight costs low and streamline access to ports, as well as improve infrastructure on Snoqualmie Pass. Higher shipping costs make Washington products less competitive. Voigt also recommended increasing allowable truck weights nationwide by allowing a third axle, which would spread the truck's weight, cause less wear and tear upon the roads and allow drivers to brake more quickly.

ROUNDTABLE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORTATION REGIONAL PROJECTS AND PERSPECTIVES

TransCo Director Karen Bonaudi, lead a panel consisting of Grant County Economic Development Executive Director Terry Brewer, Zip Truck Line President John Wright and Columbia Basin Railroad Business Development Director Scott Williams. The panelists spoke to commission members about the importance of transportation to regional economic development.

Mr. Brewer called transportation the "linchpin" of economic development. He asked that the Commission support good policy to keep the transportation components functioning the way they are and support policy to seek improvements where we can."

Mr. Wright and Mr. Williams spoke of their respective companies' own developments and partnerships, and the need for the various modes of transportation to work together.

Ms. Bonaudi expressed that there is no single answer - it's not all about rail or trucks. It's how it all works together. The message is - there's room for not only rail, truck, barge and air, but also different models within those systems themselves.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Paul Locke, citizen, shared his concerns regarding the quality of paving materials and the weight of vehicles on the roads. He also commented regarding tunneling on I-90 and maintenance costs that could be saved.

Joe Rogers, Chair, Trail Planning Team for Moses Lake provided written comments to the Commission encouraging it to keep in mind the importance of trail development and enhancement as an important mode of transportation

COMMISSION BUSINESS

It was moved by Commissioner Stedman and seconded by Commissioner Parker to appoint Commissioner Dan O'Neal as Chair and Elmira Forner as Vice Chair for fiscal year 2009. The motion passed with Commissioner Distler opposing.

The Commission meeting adjourned at 5 p.m., on June 17, 2008.

WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

DAN O'NEAL, Chair

ELMIRA FORNER, Vice Chair

PHILIP PARKER, Member

DALE STEDMAN, Member

DICK FORD, Member

ABSENT
CAROL MOSER, Member

ROBERT S. DISTLER, Member

PAULA HAMMOND, Ex-Officio Member
Secretary of Transportation

JENNIFER ZIEGLER, Governor's Office

ATTEST:

REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

DATE OF APPROVAL